

European Science, Engineering and Technology Highlights¹ OCTOBER 2014

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¹ Note: If you would like additional information or background, please feel free to contact NSFEurope@nsf.gov

1 A worthy ambition - Finalizing the European Research Area is still a vibrant and relevant goal



The completion of the European Research Area remains a “gradual process”, admits the European Commission rather forlornly, at the conclusion of a report it published earlier this week on progress towards an entity within which European researchers and their ideas can circulate freely. The European Research Area (ERA) was originally due to be finalized by the end of this year.

Full article available at:

<http://www.nature.com/news/a-worthy-ambition-1.15931>



2 EU Strategy for International Cooperation in Research & Innovation - State of Play



This communication provides a report on the state of play of the European Commission's strategy on international cooperation in research and innovation (which was adopted in September 2012). The Commission committed to reporting on progress regarding the implementation of the strategy in 2014. The conclusions drawn in this document are as follows:

- The international dimension of Horizon 2020 and its work programs needs to be further strengthened through a better integration of international cooperation in the Horizon 2020 Strategic Programming and Work Program development.
- Work on developing common principles and framework conditions and removing obstacles to cooperation needs to continue.
- Monitoring of the impact of the strategy through quantitative indicators.

Full article available at:

<http://www.euussciencetechnology.eu/content/eu-strategy-international-cooperation-research-innovation-state-play>



3 Europe: Employment prospects rosier for Erasmus graduates



The findings of The Erasmus Impact Study, released last Monday, are indisputable – young people who study or train abroad are half as likely to face long-term unemployment as their non-mobile peers. And five years after graduation, the jobless rate of these students is an impressive 23% lower.

Beefing up the argument for the Erasmus mobility scheme – against the backdrop of skyrocketing youth unemployment levels in the European Union – is that apart from improving career prospects, study or training abroad also offers students broader horizons and social links.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140924163632358>



4 Progress, problems with researcher mobility in Europe



There has been significant progress in alleviating obstacles to mobility for researchers in Europe – but advances have been uneven and challenges remain in some countries in the areas of recruitment, researcher skills, working conditions and career opportunities.

The third annual report* of a three-year study includes for the first time a composite index of European Union research excellence compared with that of other major economies, which it says can be seen as a proxy for the attractiveness of Europe for researchers.

“The EU is significantly behind the United States, but well ahead of Japan, South Korea, China, India and Brazil – in descending order.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140926115227742>

*Report available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Researchers%20Report%202014_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf



5 Europe: Gearing up for research and innovation funds in new EU countries



S2E in a nutshell © EU, 2014

The Stairway to Excellence (S2E) project, launched today, will help new Member States optimize usage of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and Horizon 2020 (the EU 7-year program in support of research and innovation) for research, development and innovation. The project will be managed by the Smart Specialization Platform of the European Commission's Joint Research Center and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

Full article available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/gearing-research-and-innovation-funds-new-eu-countries>



6 Asian grid builds on European experience to further international research



Connecting experts with their counterparts in different regions of the world and making the latest research results freely available to all is likely to represent a great boost for the scientific inquiry. The EUAsiaGrid project helped establish an Asian e-Science Grid Infrastructure that fosters access to scientific data and facilitates the creation of collaborative partnerships.

Full article available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/star/index_en.cfm?p=ss-141017euasiagrid&calledby=infocentre&item=Infocentre&artid=32962



7 OECD report praises German vocational education



According to the OECD, Germany is still lagging behind other member countries in academics statistics. Furthermore, the majority of students still tend to come from an academic family background. But the Paris-based organization is full of praise for the country's vocational education system. Around 31% of young people in Germany take up studying during their life, says the *Education at a Glance 2014 report*, which analyzes the education systems of the 34 OECD countries as well as Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Latvia, Russia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. This compares with an OECD average of 38% and with around 50% in Finland, Denmark and Poland.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140918150332997>



8 Germany: All universities now free of charge



All German universities will be free of charge when term starts next week after fees were abandoned in Lower Saxony, the last of seven states to charge. "Tuition fees are socially unjust," said Dorothee Stapelfeldt, Senator for Science in Hamburg, which scrapped charges in 2012. "They particularly discourage young people who do not have a traditional academic family background from taking up studies. It is a core task of politics to ensure that young women and men can study with a high quality standard free of charge in Germany."

The experiment with tuition fees, which began in 2006, was overturned by democratic pressure against conservative-led state governments, all in the west of Germany, which decided to charge €1,000 (US\$1,268) a year. Within eight years, all the states have changed their minds, with Lower Saxony the last to give way after the defeat of its Christian Democrat rulers last year.

Source: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140925205624942>

Full report: <http://www.fchornet.com/news/all-german-universities-will-be-free-of-charge-when-term-h3090.html>



9 Norway: A robust budget for research



The Norwegian Government has proposed to increase public funding of research activity to the equivalent of one per cent of Norway's GDP in the next five years. The budget proposal also includes significant growth in funding to promote world-leading research groups, a knowledge-based and competitive industrial sector, and internationalization measures.

Full article available at:

http://www.forskningsradet.no/en/Newsarticle/A_robust_budget_for_research/1254000835556



10 Norway: Research data must be shared



The Research Council of Norway has adopted its first policy on open access to research data from publicly funded projects. The guidelines apply to all data generated by projects funded by the Research Council – with a few exceptions.

Full article available at:

http://www.forskningssradet.no/en/Newsarticle/Research_data_must_be_shared/1254000848864



11 Norway: Students protest tuition fees for non-EU students



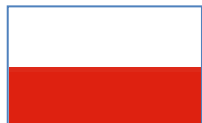
In next year's budget, Norway's government proposes to introduce tuition fees for international students from outside the European Union and European Economic Area, or EEA – despite overall parliamentary opposition. Student organizations fear the introduction of fees will have a domino effect, leading the state to eventually charge everyone. "This is a bad idea. We cannot accept that the government will move away from a fundamental principle," said leader of the Norwegian student organization, Anders Kvernmo Langset. He noted that free higher education was one of Norway's main competitive advantages and helped to attract top students.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20141009213402242>



12 Poland: Linking internationalization and research productivity



The research productivity of Polish academics is strongly linked to international collaboration. The average productivity of Polish academics involved in international collaboration – 'internationalists' – is consistently higher than the rate of Polish 'locals' in all academic fields.

The impact of international collaboration on average productivity is much higher in Poland than in other European countries studied, with important policy implications.

The relationship between international cooperation and research productivity has been widely discussed, with the general assumption that collaborative activities in research increase research productivity.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140924155131147>



13 Romania: Students object to 'unjustified and illegal' taxes



Tuition fees for university studies have been growing steadily in Romania in the last few years, according to the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania, or ANOSR. Many of the taxes paid by students at 21 universities in the country are “unjustified, borderline illegal or simply illegal”.

The alliance recently launched a study that includes the value of the most important taxes students have to pay. In the last academic year, 38% of universities increased tuition fees. Moreover, in the last three years, 81% of universities increased fees, according to the study.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20141002214041940>



14 United Kingdom (Scotland): Academics query post referendum research funding future



The Scottish people may have spoken, but academics are finding that some questions remain unanswered about the future of higher education in the wake of the independence referendum. With the UK government promising more devolution to Holyrood in the wake of the ‘no’ vote, the debate centers on the impact these powers might have on Scottish universities, particularly in terms of funding.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20141002214501628>



15 Sweden: To fee or not to fee in Erasmus Mundus collaborations?



Whether Swedish students may be charged fees for courses that are part of international collaborations involving several universities across countries – many of which themselves levy fees – has been tying Sweden with its free higher education in knots. The government has proposed a law specifying when a study fee should not be regarded as a student fee.

Last June the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research sent out a nine-page memo (in Swedish) to higher education institutions and a long list of unions, student organizations and others, asking for comments on introducing fees for courses within the country’s framework of international collaboration.

The background was that Swedish students challenged Uppsala University’s decision to charge domestic students tuition fees for a masters offered with seven European universities under the European Union's Erasmus Mundus program.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140925164328434>



16 US, UK slide in global ranking continues as Asia gains ground



The 11th annual Times Higher Education world university ranking confirms the continuing erosion of United States and United Kingdom domination of global higher education and the inexorable rise of universities outside the North Atlantic axis. While the California Institute of Technology is again at the top of the ranking for the fourth consecutive year, the compilers report “worrying evidence” of a decline in North America, with significant losses for both the US and Canada, while the UK loses three universities from the top 200 list, with the academic focus consolidating in London and the southeast of the country.

The top 10 is a preserve for America and the UK, with seven and three universities respectively. Oxford, which tied in second place last year, drops to third, while Cambridge climbs from seventh to fifth.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2014093020582046>



17 United Kingdom: Toolkit maps higher education ‘cold spots’, links to economic growth



A new interactive toolkit developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, or HEFCE, has the potential to boost socio-economic development in the United Kingdom – and in future possibly allow previously higher education-deprived youngsters a chance to study.

New [data](#) published by HEFCE unravels links between economic growth and higher education provision, and also pinpoints ‘cold spots’ in higher education provision and participation across England.

Full article available at:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20141002152429563>

